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News

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USDOT Observes Ninth Annual National Safe Digging Month *More Than \$1.2 Million in Grants Awarded to State 811 Call Centers*

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) today announced a grant package of more than \$1.2 million for the state One-Call centers that respond to the national 8-1-1 hotline. The grants come during this year's National Safe Digging Month observance, celebrated each April to bring national awareness to the "Call 811" safe digging message and help fund the implementation of one-call laws and programs that raise awareness about the importance of calling, before you dig.

"National Safe Digging Month underscores a critical safety message that is relevant throughout the year – you must call 811 before beginning any digging project, no matter how large or small," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "It's easy, it's free, and, it's the law."

8-1-1 is the national safe digging hotline that everyone from backyard gardeners to professional contractors is required by law to call to get underground utilities marked prior to digging. Dialing 8-1-1 directs excavators to their state's one-call center, which then arranges for a local company to mark lines for diggers to avoid.

Between 1988 and 2014, there were 1,815 pipeline incidents caused by excavation damage that resulted in 193 deaths, 757 injuries and nearly \$545 million in property damage.

"Excavation damage is a leading cause of serious pipeline incidents and can lead to significant injuries and property damage, and in some cases, death," said PHMSA Administrator Marie Therese Dominguez. "These incidents are entirely preventable with a call to 811. Calling before you dig is the first line of defense to keeping people safe."

PHMSA's [One-Call grants](#) have existed since 1994 and provide up to \$45,000 to help states promote damage prevention awareness campaigns and support 8-1-1 call centers.

PHMSA participates in a number of initiatives each year to observe Safe Digging Month and increase awareness of the requirement to call 8-1-1 before digging for adults and children alike.

The agency collaborates with organizations dedicated to pipeline and underground utility safety such as the [Common Ground Alliance](#) and the National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives, who works with PHMSA to review and allocate one-call grants.

For the third year in a row, PHMSA has also partnered with the National Energy Foundation's [Energy Safe Kids](#) initiative during Safe Digging Month for an [811 poster contest](#) aimed at challenging school-aged students' creativity with the safe digging message. This year's contest includes a pilot [811 video contest](#) for high school students.

Last July, PHMSA issued a [Final Rule](#) establishing the process for evaluating State excavation damage prevention programs and enforcing Federal standards in States where such requirements are inadequate or do not exist.

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The mission of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration is to protect people and the environment by advancing the safe transportation of energy and other hazardous materials that are essential to our daily lives. PHMSA develops and enforces regulations for the safe operation of the nation's 2.6 million mile pipeline transportation system and the nearly 1 million daily shipments of hazardous materials by land, sea, and air. Please visit <http://phmsa.dot.gov> or https://twitter.com/PHMSA_DOT for more information.